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THE PASSION GROUP IN TOWNELEY

In recent articles on the Towneley Mystery cycle I have endeavored to present the evidence which has led me to the following conclusions:¹

1. That the Towneley, York, and true-Coventry cycles were indebted to a common liturgical source for their plays upon the events connected with Christ's birth.

2. That the same is true of Towneley and York in the Resurrection plays. These plays have been lost from true-Coventry.

3. That there is in T evidence of the work of four editors, one writing in couplets; one, in quatrains; one, called the Y or York editor, making extensive borrowings from York; and one, called the W or Wakefield editor, writing, in a unique stanza and a highly original style, the leading comedy scenes in the whole series of English cycles.

4. That a study of the work of the first two of these four editors makes it possible to say that the Y editor made his additions to the cycle last, since all the groups but his contain couplets and all, including his, contain quatrains.

5. The fifth point concerns itself with the method and results of the work of the W editor. First, it is evident that generally he rewrote old plays, following their order of development faithfully. Second, it is clear that the superior interest of his plays led to the dropping of others near them in the cycle. For instance, there are two shepherd scenes by this author, but there is no birth scene, which should be the central scene of the Christmas group. In the same way the superior interest of those trial scenes which he has revised has led to the dropping of the other similar scenes from the Passion group.

I have stated these conclusions thus at length, because I desire in their light to summarize briefly a study I have made of the Passion and Old Testament groups in T; to comment upon a few questions of editorship in connection with certain plays of the Passion group; and then to state as clearly as I can a summary of my opinion as to the development of the whole cycle, in order to round out my study of its characteristics. I shall discuss the questions of editorship after summarizing the study of the Passion group and before taking up the Old Testament plays.

¹ *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XXIV, No. 3; *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, X, 4; XI, 2.

The conclusions at which I have arrived in regard to the Passion group as a whole are the result of a comparison of the plays in Y and T carried out as was the comparison of the Christmas and Resurrection groups. The effectiveness of that comparison, however, depended upon the fact that in both these groups I had liturgical plays with which to compare the cyclic plays, and that in the Christmas group I also had the plays of the true-Coventry cycle. In the Passion group, unfortunately, these checks are lacking, as no well-developed liturgical play on the Passion is preserved,¹ and the true-Coventry Passion group is lost. The evidence offered by the comparison of Y and T is, therefore, not so complete; but it is, of course, supported by the evidence of common liturgical origin in the Christmas and Resurrection groups. Without that support, indeed, it would be hardly substantiated.

The Passion group naturally divides into two sections, plays on Christ's ministry, and plays strictly upon the Passion. The comparison revealed that T plays 19 and 31, the ministry plays, showed so little similarity to the Y ministry plays that it was impossible to conclude they had a common source. On the other hand, the Passion plays proper, in spite of much editing and consequent dissimilarity in detail, showed enough of the original framework to indicate strongly that they had a common liturgical source. To these plays I especially direct attention. They include plays 20 through 24, and 32, in Towneley, and 26 through 36, in York.

It was found that T play 20, which includes the *Conspiracy to Take Jesus, The Last Supper, The Agony, and The Betrayal*, agrees in fundamental structure with the corresponding Y plays 26, 27, 28. It is this play which contains the most perplexing editorial problems in the group. T play 21, *The Trial before Caiaphas*, largely rewritten by the W editor, corresponds in the same way with Y play 29, except that it contains no scene of *Peter's Denial*. The next three scenes present in Y, *The Dream of Pilate's Wife, Jesus before Pilate, The Trial before Herod*, Y 30, 31, are not found in T, but the *Second Trial before Pilate*, Y 32, is T 22. This T play, besides containing direct borrowings from York, has been largely rewritten by the W editor, so that Y and T differ in the internal development of the scenes, but are upon

¹ Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, II, 75, 423.

the same subjects and follow the same order in the development of incidents. The next Y play, 32, on *The Remorse of Judas* and *The Purchase of the Field of Blood* is not in T except for a fragment of the Judas scene inserted out of its natural order as T play 32. But the scenes on *The Judgment of Jesus, Christ Led to Calvary, The Crucifixion*, and *The Death and Burial* are in both cycles in the same order, though with considerable variation in detail, due here chiefly to editing in Y. Finally there is a T play on *The Talents*, or *The Casting of Lots for Christ's Garments*, not in Y, and clearly written by the W editor.

There is revealed in this summary much similarity in the general order of plays and episodes and considerable discrepancy. It is, however, possible to show how this discrepancy was doubtless due to editing and is in either case merely deviation from a common framework in the originals. For instance, Doctor W. A. Craigie has distinctly shown that the Passion play in York has been extensively edited by the insertion of episodes from the northern Gospel of Nicodemus;¹ and it is at the points where these episodes are inserted that we find Y in detail differing from T. On the other hand, it is quite possible to believe that the evident total omission of scenes from T arose because of the superior interest in the W editor's revisions, as was the case in the Christmas group. This cost the loss of the largely repetitive trial scenes which he did not revise; while his well-known habit of following in his revision the plan of the older play has retained for us the fundamental framework of the original scenes. Thus are explained the divergent paths by which these cycles have traveled from their liturgical base; and thus also are emphasized the numerous points at which, in spite of this divergence, they retain striking similarities in framework and development. The very presence, in spite of divergent editing, of such traces of fundamental similarity all through the group strengthens the force of any argument for the same liturgical source.

That the comparison, as far as it went, was conducted precisely as with the other groups, would indicate, it seems to me, a possibility that it points to a correct solution of the problems aroused by the similarities between the Passion scenes in the two cycles. And I also

¹ *An English Miscellany*, Article IX, pp. 53-61.

think that the neatness with which the application of this principle of similar liturgical source, along with the other points tabulated at the beginning of this article, solves the difficulties in connection with the various editing of T play 20, the first of the Passion group, is, in its small way, further evidence of the probability of a liturgical source. It is therefore worth while to examine the problems offered by this play.

Play 20 has been worked over by various editors, but nothing very definite has ever been discovered concerning their number and the extent of each man's work. There is considerable diversity of meter. The play contains stanzas by the W, the couplet, the quatrain, and the York editors. Davidson, in his analysis, traces what he thinks to be the work of six authors. Hohlfeld thinks the play to have been written in dependence upon the corresponding Y plays, 26, 27, 28.¹ It naturally falls into three divisions. (1) *The Conspiracy*; (2) *The Last Supper*; (3) *The Agony and Betrayal*. These can best be treated in turn.

The Conspiracy occupies the first forty-eight stanzas. It corresponds to Y play 26. Metrically it has two divisions: st. 1-6 in the W editor's favorite meter; st. 7-18 in the meter characteristic of many of the scenes in the York cycle. This meter Davidson calls the meter characteristic of the original or parent Y cycle, and he has proved by a series of complicated rhyme tests that these stanzas in T are a borrowing from an older version of the Y cycle than that now extant, which differed somewhat from the extant cycle.² The present discussion concerns the relation between these two sections. Was Y added to W, replacing a large part of the original scene, or is W simply a prologue added to Y after it was borrowed? This last would seem to be the most obvious explanation, if evidence of meter, etc., in other plays, as well as in this, did not indicate that the W stanzas found elsewhere were added to the cycle before the Y borrowings. In fact, this particular scene bears this out. Pilate, after calling for silence, tells who he is and how powerful he is. He has heard of a lazy rascal who is praised as a prophet. This man, Jesus, preaches that if he lives a year, he will destroy their law. Pilate is afraid,

¹ *Anglia*, XI, 296.

² Davidson, *English Mystery Plays*, pp. 137-57.

but says he will protect their rights. Then he relates some of the things Jesus has preached and, at the end, advises that he be let alone, for if these things be true, his sect will spread and overcome every other. Plainly, Pilate is very well acquainted with Christ's preaching and deeds. Why, then, does Caiaphas appear in st. 7 and proceed to acquaint Pilate with all these charges? This continues until st. 26. The present introduction to the corresponding scene in Y would be more natural than this one. There Pilate vaunts in his usual way and ends by asking whether there are any who wish to make complaints; at which the priests present their charge against Christ. The W introduction was evidently never written for the scene as it stands, but for another scene along lines which managed the introduction of the priests somewhat differently. That this lost scene was otherwise along the same lines as the present one is proven by the prominence given to Pilate at the start, a characteristic, by the way, not present in the scriptural source. Again, the lost scene in the W stanza was in itself, probably, a revision of a still older scene along the same lines; as this has been found to be the favorite method of the W editor. The same thing is illustrated on the York side in this very quotation, of which the present Y play 26 is a rewriting and enlargement. Through this habit of rewriting along old lines, the original framework has been preserved as the basis of the present scenes. The quotation from Y extends throughout the Judas scene.

The Last Supper extends from the beginning of st. 49 through st. 70. It corresponds to Y play 27, a play, like the quotation from Y discussed above, from the Y parent-cycle. Its meter is couplets and quatrains. The couplets are forty-seven in number, all in st. 49.

In T the scene is somewhat confused. Both T and Y follow the chronology of John, chaps. 13 and 14; but T is very irregular as a result of editing. Y runs:

1. The foot-washing scene (John 13:1-20).
2. The scene of Judas and the sop (John 13:21-35).
3. Christ prophesies Peter's denial (John 13:36-38).
4. Exhortation by Christ. The exhortation is taken from Luke 22:28-38, but occurs chronologically according to John, as John 13:38, above, is followed by the exhortation of John 14:1-31.
5. Final stanza, including paraphrase of John 14:31, "Arise, let us go hence."

The references to John show that the scene follows the chronology there given. As a matter of fact it is not a quotation from John but a composite from all four accounts. This is illustrated by 4, where Luke's exhortation is given in John's chronology. The same observation applies to T, which is, in outline, as follows:

1. Lines 314-45: John and Peter go and prepare the Passover. Not in Y.

2. Lines 346-52: John announces the Passover. Jesus prepares to wash the disciples' feet.

3. Lines 353-73: The scene of Judas and the sop.

4. Lines 374-81: Peter's denial prophesied.

5. Lines 382-83: Paraphrase of John 14:31, "Arise, let us go hence."

This evidently was once the end of the scene.

6. Lines 384-423: Foot-washing scene with exhortation. In the midst of this portion couplets end.

7. Lines 424-31: Prophecy of Peter's denial repeated.

8. Lines 432-87: Exhortation of John, chap. 14.

9. Lines 488-91: Paraphrase of John 14:31, "Arise, let us go hence."

A comparison of the two accounts reveals:

1. That the preparation of the Passover is omitted from Y. At this point in Y occurs the break between plays 26 and 27. When the break was made this episode was probably dropped.

2. That the foot-washing scene is only hinted at in T at the place where chronologically it should occur.

3. That the exhortation is missing between the first prophecy of Peter's denial and the first paraphrase of John 14:31.

4. That the rest of the foot-washing scene occurs after the first paraphrase.

5. That the prophecy of Peter's denial and the paraphrase are repeated.

6. That between them occurs a long exhortation founded on John rather than on Luke.

7. That through the foot-washing scene all is written in couplets, the rest in quatrains.

The couplet editor when he rewrote the older scene left out the exhortation, or else it was subsequently dropped. It is hardly possible that he altered the position of the foot-washing episode. The quotations from T and Y which follow occur in that scene. In Y they follow each other closely; but, while in the same order in T, there is between the first and the second of the quotations a break of thirty-two lines.

- Y, play 27, st. 4, line 40: Do vs haue watir here in hast.
 T, line 348: Yei, gyf vs water tyll oure hande,
 Y, line 43: Commes forthe with me, all in feere.
 T, line 380: Commys furth, both oone and othere;
 Y, lines 45-46: Settis youre feete fourth, late see,
 They schall be wasschen sone.
 T, lines 384-85: Sitt all downe, and here and sees,
 ffor I shall wesh youre feet on knees.
 Y, lines 51-52: Peter, bott if pou latte me wasshe pi feete
 pou getis no parte in blisse with me.
 T, lines 392-93: Bot I the wesh, thou mon mys
 parte with me in heuens blys.

Evidently the foot-washing scene was not all shifted. It is improbable that an editor, rewriting an older episode, would have shifted only part of it in this manner; nor would he have put it at the end of a scene whose real close was so clearly marked, as is this, by the biblical paraphrase noted. For a time, at least, the scene must have existed in the same order as in Y, except that the exhortation was lacking. The quatrain editor attempted to remedy that defect. Either the foot-washing scene was by some chance already shifted, or he shifted it in order to make it more easy to insert his exhortation. Probably the first was the case. At any rate, he repeats the closing words of the foot-washing scene and leads up through the prophecy of Peter's denial, found at the close of John, chap. 13, to the exhortation given in John, chap. 14, ending with the repeated paraphrase. Whether his work is an original use of quatrains, or an editing of a part of the York scene on the same subject cannot be told. If it is an editing, there are no phrases from York remaining. It is very evidently a piece of editorial patchwork intended to supply the missing exhortation.

The next scene, *The Agony*, st. 71-86, is largely rewritten in quatrains. It corresponds to the first part of Y play 28, which has been rewritten itself, as it is not in the meter of the parent cycle. This part of T may also be a rewriting of the older Y play, which has replaced the original T scene, as did st. 7-48. This is indicated by the single stanza in the meter of the Y parent-cycle, Y, st. 80-81, which occurs in the speech of Trinitas.

The Second Appearance of Judas follows, st. 87-103, for which

there is no biblical authority. It has already been shown that this is a W scene rewritten by the quatrain editor¹ and so is proof that W must have preceded Y.

The rest of the play, *The Betrayal*, is also in quatrains. That it was also borrowed from an older Y play than the present is indicated by the two Y stanzas which remain, 107-8 and 117-18, though these show a partial breaking-up into quatrains.

The play as a whole is evidently an old T play, large portions of which have been replaced by much-edited borrowings from Y. The portions which remain are themselves rewritings by the couplet and W editors of a still older play which must have borne close relations to Y in structure; for it contained that Judas scene which is independent of any biblical source and agreed with Y in raising Pilate to a prominent position in the play. It may, therefore, be assumed that the scenes from Y have taken the place of older scenes along the same lines. In spite of much re-editing the play has retained those fundamental characteristics in which it resembles Y and which they could both have attained only during a period in which they were identical.² Thus a study of T play 20 substantiates the theory of cyclic development upon which this study of T has been based. It is now necessary for us to consider some points in connection with the Old Testament group.

In the Old Testament group we face a situation which is quite different from any we have had before except in the plays composing the first section of the Passion group. When we compare these plays

¹ *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, XI, No. 2.

² In this connection it is proper to call attention to a contribution to *Modern Language Notes* for June, 1911, by Miss Frances Foster, of Bryn Mawr College. Miss Foster endeavors to show by quotation a dependence upon the Northern Passion in the Passion group in T. She has made three comparative selections: (I) from T, XX, 250-81, included in the section which Davidson has shown to be from the York parent-cycle; (II) from T, XX, 314-29, which is the work of the couplet editor; (III) from T, XXII, 358-74, which is the work of the Wakefield man. The second selection is obviously a complete quotation from the Northern Passion imbedded within a mass of material similar to that found in the Passion. The other two show similarity in rhymes, if one allows himself to distort the order of the lines, and also similarity in phraseology in certain common, idiomatic catch-phrases. Now the second selection is obviously a direct indication of source. The other two in connection with the second might be considered a similar indication, if it were not that they are by totally distinct authors and that one of them was originally written for the Y cycle and borrowed by an editor of Towneley. The couplet editor, however, evidently borrowed from the Northern Passion in this instance and this fact raises an interesting inquiry regarding the couplet editor and his use of sources which I hope may at some time be worked out.

in the T and Y cycles we find it impossible to discover any relationship similar to that which has been traced in other groups. The plays of this group differ considerably in title and as markedly in the framework of those the titles of which are alike. It is a safe assumption, therefore, that if the plays of the Christmas group in the two cycles, for instance, sprang from the same liturgical source, the plays of this group did not thus spring, but must have been added to the cycles after they had commenced their separate development. At the earliest they must have been of the transitional period which marks the time when the cycles were undergoing their process of transfer from the church service to the trade gilds.

I have elsewhere touched upon one point in evidence of this.¹ The pseudo-Augustinian sermon detailing the prophecies concerning Christ's coming, which was the basis from which the Old Testament plays developed, was sometimes not expanded, but compressed into a prologue, prophetic in nature, attached to the Christmas scenes.² This appears to have been the case in the liturgical play that is the common source of Y, T, and true-Cov., for each of these cycles contains such a prologue, Y and T develop their Old Testament scenes along different lines, and true-Cov. is without any Old Testament scenes at all. Evidently Y and T were thus compelled to undergo a separate development in this group.

The T plays in the Old Testament group are upon the following subjects in order: (1) *Creation, Fall of Lucifer, Adam and Eve in Eden*; (2) *The Killing of Abel*; (3) *Noah and the Ark*; (4) *Abraham and Isaac*; (5) *Isaac*; (6) *Jacob*; (7) *The Prophets*; (8) *Pharaoh* (Y 11 borrowed); (9) *Caesar Augustus*. Those of Y are in order: (1) *Fall of Lucifer*; (2, 3) *Creation*; (4) *Adam and Eve in Eden*; (5) *Fall of Man*; (6) *Adam and Eve Driven from Eden*; (7) *The Killing of Abel*; (8) *The Building of the Ark*; (9) *Noah, His Wife, The Flood, etc.*; (10) *Abraham and Isaac*; (11) *Departure of Israelites from Egypt* (borrowed in T under title *Pharaoh*). It is evident that through the story of Abraham the subjects of the scenes are practically the same, and that the chief variation comes in the rest of the series. These points are emphasized by a catalogue of the scenes in two other cycles

¹ *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XXIV, No. 3, pp. 427 and 433.

² Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, II, 52 ff.

entirely outside of our discussion. In Chester the subjects in their order are: (1) *Fall of Lucifer*; (2) *Creation, Adam and Eve in Eden, Fall of Man, Adam and Eve Driven Out of Eden, The Killing of Abel*; (3) *Noah's Flood*; (4) *History of Lot and Abraham* including Isaac scene; (5) *Balaam*; (6) scene with *Octavian and Sybil* as part of the Nativity. This last is a prophetic scene. In so-called Coventry the subjects are: (1) *Fall of Lucifer, Creation, Adam and Eve in Eden*; (2) *Fall of Man, Adam and Eve Driven from Eden*; (3) *Killing of Abel*; (4) *Noah's Flood*; (5) *Abraham and Isaac*; (6) *Moses and the Two Tables*; (7) *The Prophets*.

The emphasis seems to have shifted from the prophecy, which was the essential thing in the old liturgical *Prophetæ*, to events in Bible history. The story of man's fall is necessary to any complete account of Christ's life, since it gives the reason for that life. So it is not surprising that in every cycle which contains Old Testament plays we find at the beginning a play with that as a central episode. In the cycles it is broken up into various scenes, but was probably all one originally. Such a play, extending only through *Cain and Abel* and ending in a *Prophetæ*, is preserved in the Norman-French *Ordo repræsentationis Adæ*.¹ In the English cycles it seems to have included certain well-known scenes down through the life of Abraham; but after that there was much latitude allowed. Thus Y has only the *Departure from Egypt*. So-called Coventry has *Moses and the Two Tables* and a *Prophetæ*. Chester has *Balaam and His Ass* and includes a scene between *Octavian and the Sybil* in the Nativity. T has *Isaac, Jacob, The Prophets, The Departure from Egypt, and Caesar Augustus*, another prophetic play; the most extended development of all at this point. Furthermore, although the titles of the first few plays agree to a large extent in all the cycles, the development of each is along separate lines. T is structurally different from Y, Chester, and so-called Coventry; and these are different from each other. A noticeable point in this connection is the position of the Lucifer scene in T, where it is not first, as in the other cycles, but imbedded in the story of the Creation. In Y this Creation story receives a much longer treatment than in T, and the method of conducting Adam and Eve into Paradise is different. The plays were

¹ Chambers, II, 70, 71.

evidently added to each of these two cycles at a period when they were no longer connected, as we were led to surmise by the absence of Old Testament plays in true-Cov.

Further, it is probable the *Prophetæ* in T was added after the plays connected with the Fall. It has been remarked that there seemed to be a very definite idea in the minds of the transitional editors as to what subjects in connection with early biblical history should be treated. It would be only natural, then, to add these plays to the cycle first, leaving the remaining portions of the history to be covered as time went on. This argument furnishes a reason why T contains five plays between the *Abraham* and the *Annunciation* and Y only one. The very presence of the *Departure from Egypt* in T illustrates the method of this growth. It is a borrowing from Y and must, therefore, have been a late addition to T. This is borne out by the fact that it is not in the correct chronological position. Instead of being before the *Prophets*, as it ought, it is between that and another prophetic play, the *Caesar Augustus*. The question naturally arises, Which of the three was added first? This it is impossible to say, but the irregularity shows that some, if not all, were late additions, though the sources from which the *Prophets* and *Caesar Augustus* were obtained is not known.

In this connection Professor ten Brink's theory as to the sources of *Isaac* and *Jacob* is of interest.¹ He believes that the thirteenth-century *Harrowing of Hell* is the earliest English drama and that the second was a play on *Jacob and Esau*, which appears to have been composed not far from the mouth of the Humber, and probably to the north of the dialect line. This play is, he thinks, preserved in the two plays on *Isaac* and *Jacob* in T. He says:

This play has been handed down in the Towneley collection; unfortunately it is mutilated at the beginning, and also divided into two parts: *Isaac* and *Jacob*. However, it originally formed, and, in fact, still forms, one drama, which was produced independently without regard to any cycle of mysteries, and indeed earlier than most of the others, probably than all the other parts of the cycle in which it was subsequently incorporated. All this can easily be proved by means now at the disposal of philology, but this is not the place for entering into the subject. Less certain is the local origin of the piece. The assumption that few of the rhyming words have been

¹ ten Brink, II, 244.

altered in their transmission could, for instance, allow of the supposition that the drama might have been produced in the Northeast-Midland territory, rather than in the southern districts of Northumbria, a supposition which would coincide very well with many other peculiarities of the work.

Pollard,¹ in discussing this opinion, raises the following objections:

1. *The Harrowing of Hell* is a dramatic poem, not a miracle play.
2. No one would act an isolated vernacular *Jacob and Esau*.
3. The play of *Abraham* would suggest a continuation to *Isaac* and *Jacob*.
4. Differences of dialect can be attributed to the removal from one district to another of a play-writing monk.

Yet he believes that the two plays do belong to an early period.

It might be still more probable that these two plays did commence their existence in some East-Midland cycle, and not as an isolated play, and were then borrowed by a T compiler, who was commencing to bridge the gap between the play on man's fall and the *Annunciation*. This would agree with the present theory and satisfy the philological considerations at which ten Brink hints, as well as the objections advanced by Pollard.

There are one or two other points about T which must be noticed. The first is in connection with the Lucifer scene in play 1, which seems to be a late insertion in the play. In every other cycle it comes first. Here it is rather awkwardly inserted after the fifth day of Creation. Besides, there are indications in other parts of the play that it originally contained no Fall of Lucifer. Every cycle opens with the sentence, "Ego sum alpha et Ω ," followed by a translation, or explanation, in English. In the T cycle this is prefixed directly to the *Creation* in such a way that no scene could ever have intervened between the two. Again, st. 11, in couplets, seems to be a rough attempt by the couplet editor to connect the fifth day of Creation and the Lucifer scene. Finally at the very end of the play as it now stands, Lucifer in Hell recounts briefly, as though it had not been given elsewhere, the event of the Fall. This may have been the only reference to the Fall in the original play.

The play *Caesar Augustus*, play 9, is peculiar. It is based entirely upon Luke 2:2, and is essentially prophetic. The emperor is enraged that a virgin shall bear a child who will lay low his might (Augustus

¹ *E.E.T.S. edition of the Towneley plays, Introduction, p. xxv.*

and Herod seem to be confused). He asks counsel and finally sends out a messenger to command the folk to own him alone as Lord and to pay tribute. That it is a prophetic scene is made more evident by a comparison with Chester, where a similar scene is interwoven with the Nativity. In the Chester scene Octavian interviews the Sibyl when the Senators offer him the crown, and she prophesies concerning Christ. This is not the T scene, but it shows that the character of Octavian, or Augustus, in these plays had grown up in connection with the Sibyl, out of the old *Prophetae*. In the sermon of prophecy noted above, the Sibyl was one of the prophets quoted.

We have, then, in the Old Testament scenes in T and Y, two distinct series without any such connection as has been traced for most of the rest of the cycle. They must have been added after T and Y had commenced their separate development. In other words, they must be transitional. There are indications that they were not all added to each cycle at the same time; but that a play of several scenes centering about man's fall was first added, after which the gap between this and the *Annunciation* was gradually filled.

To outline clearly the results of this rather detailed investigation is a matter of some difficulty. It has to do with the chronology of the growth of the Towneley cycle. I believe that it started from certain plays included in the church service, which must have followed the use of York. Out of this liturgical drama were developed plays 10–19 inclusive, the Christmas group; plays 25–28, inclusive, the Resurrection group; with a strong probability that there was also a Passion play in this liturgy from which developed plays 20–23, inclusive, the second section of the Passion group with the exception of play 24, and including play 32. I believe, further, that the Old Testament plays, 1–9, inclusive; the first section of the Passion group, the plays on Christ's ministry, plays 19 and 31; play 24 on the Talents; and 29 and 30, the Ascension and the Judgment, were transitional or from the final, or trade-gild, period in the cycle's development. It is, of course, only in the final period of a cycle's growth that we can trace the work of editors, because we possess only the text of that period. In this cycle this development seems to be about as follows. There are traces of four editings, although it is not possible to say whether the last two are by different men. The W editor came first.

He always based his work upon an already existing play, so that in scenes with a liturgical source his editings preserve the original structure. The couplet editor, who followed him, never showed much originality and so retained the older structure and even a phrase here and there of the older text. He was followed by the editor who made the borrowings from York and who is, I am inclined to think, identical with the fourth, or quatrain, editor. His work was mainly in the substitution of scenes borrowed from Y for others already present in the cycle. The cycle as we now have it is, therefore, an evolution, certain steps in which it has been possible to trace in some detail. The field of such comparative study is by no means exhausted; a similar study with the emphasis upon York, for instance, would doubtless have its value. It is possibly sufficient to have pointed the way and at the same time to have furnished this detailed proof of my results.

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